

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as follows:

On page 2, please amend first full paragraph as follows:

Refer to FIG. 1, which is an electrical schematic diagram showing the manner in which customers may be connected to single service providers and ancillary equipment using prior art devices and techniques. Terminal block 100 includes a set of respective first terminals 102, 104, 106, 108, each of which is connected to a corresponding second terminal 118, 120, 122, 124, through a corresponding normally-closed contact 134, 136, 138, 140. During normal operation, contacts 134, ~~146~~136, 138 and 140 remain closed. However, for testing and diagnostic purposes, one or more of these contacts may be temporarily opened, for example, by introducing an insulating plug between the electrical conductors of a contact. These insulating plugs do not remain in the contacts, and are removed after testing is completed.

On page 3, please amend first full paragraph as follows:

Tip wire 142 is connected to terminal 122 of terminal block 100, and ring wire 144 is connected to terminal 124 of terminal block 100. Terminal 122 is connected to terminal 106 via a normally-closed contact 138, and terminal 124 is connected to terminal 108 via a normally-closed contact 140. Terminal 106 is connected to a tip wire ~~134~~135 routed to a customer premises, and terminal 108 is connected to a ring wire ~~136~~137 routed to this customer premises.

On page 4, please amend first paragraph as follows:

In some alternative, operational environments, tip/ring wires ~~134, 136~~ 135, 137 would no longer be utilized if the customer's service provider was changed. In these alternative environments, another set of tip-ring wires other than wires ~~134, 136~~ 135, 137 would be used to provide access to the new service provider between the customer premises and the terminal block 100. These other tip/ring wires would be connected to terminals 106, 108. Physically removing and reconnecting wires to

terminal block 100 in order to change service providers is disadvantageous. First of all, most presently available terminal blocks are not designed for repeated wire removals and reconnections. Mechanically, the terminals are designed for applications such that, once a wire is connected, it will usually remain so connected for the entire lifetime of the terminal block. With repeated wire removals and reconnections, some of all of the terminals will experience mechanical degradations over time, resulting in poor contact and imminent failure of the electrical connection. Moreover, as the quality of the connection deteriorates its resistance to the flow of electrical current increases. This added resistance generates heat and, under some circumstances, may cause a fire. Even if a fire does not occur, repairing a broken or intermittent connection is a very arduous, labor-intensive, and time-consuming process.

On page 11, please amend first full paragraph as follows:

Each of respective pairs of first and third terminals 210, 212 of third connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding outgoing twisted-pair telephone lines ~~434, 436~~ 135, 137 routed to a customer premises. Each of respective pairs of second and fourth terminals 258, 260 of fourth connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding outgoing twisted-pair telephone lines routed to a customer premises.

On page 11, please amend the second full paragraph as follows:

Typically, twisted pair telephone lines ~~434, 436~~ 135, 137 and twisted-pair telephone lines 150, 152 of a given set of associated third and fourth connection mechanisms are routed to the same customer premises, and each line is "owned" by a corresponding service provider. This practice results in a situation where one of the two twisted pairs is always inactive at any given moment in time. However, from a technical standpoint, the same pair of wires ~~434, 436~~ 135, 137 could be used to carry signals from either service provider, even though this is not "conventional" practice at the present time. In such an alternative system, wire ~~434~~ 135 would be connected to terminal 210 as well as terminal 258, and wire ~~436~~ 137 would be connected to terminal 212 as well as terminal 260, eliminating the need for redundant wire pair 150

– 152. Such an alternate system is described herein inasmuch as future regulatory developments and changes to what is now considered common practice are difficult to predict with accuracy.